

December 2005

Congressman Michael E. Capuano

8th Congressional District, Massachusetts

Serving Cambridge, Chelsea, Somerville, and most of Boston



Budget Cuts

After weeks of struggling to find the votes, Republican leaders pushed a \$50 billion package of budget cuts through the House shortly before Thanksgiving. This budget reconciliation package cut Medicaid by \$11.4 billion. One program targeted for a reduction was preventive medical care for poor children. Student loans suffered the largest reduction in the program's history, \$14.3 billion. Almost \$5 billion was cut from child support enforcement programs, limiting states' ability to collect court-ordered payments. All these reductions will offset the tax cuts that the President and the Republican-led Congress still insist on pushing and will do nothing to trim the deficit. In fact, even with these cuts, the deficit will still increase by more than \$100 billion, primarily because of additional tax cuts for the wealthy. It is hard to find fiscal responsibility, let alone justice and compassion, in such policies.

E-Update

My office provides regular updates via e-mail. Several times a month, subscribers receive information about recent votes I have cast, upcoming legislation and my work in Congress. To receive this service, visit my website at www.house.gov/capuano and click on the "subscribe" icon located on the welcome page to the left. You may unsubscribe at any time, either through the website or at the end of each update. We have archived some recent e-updates on our website if you'd like to take a look before signing up. I hope you'll join us.

Dear Friends,

2005 was a difficult year. We faced daunting problems at home and abroad, a war in Iraq and natural disasters along the Gulf Coast.

We are facing the largest budget deficit in our history yet. President Bush continues to push for tax cuts for the rich. Republicans seek to start reducing the deficit by cutting programs for our most vulnerable citizens. Recently adopted spending cuts will put many important domestic programs at risk.

Congress has shown a little more courage on foreign policy matters. Members of both parties are beginning to press the Administration for honest answers about Iraq. Although we may differ about the manner and timing of our withdrawal, more and more Members of Congress are coming to the realization that we must bring our troops home from Iraq.

2005 was a busy year for the committees on which I serve. The Transportation Committee completed action on the surface transportation bill, sending billions of dollars to our states. I have also been fighting to increase transit options for underserved areas of the 8th District. On the Financial Services Committee, I advanced legislation updating the Terrorism Risk Insurance Act of 2002 (TRIA). TRIA was passed in the aftermath of 9/11 to provide a limited federal backstop in the event of another catastrophic attack.

I am honored to represent the residents of Cambridge, Chelsea, Somerville and Boston. As always, if you have any questions, concerns or comments, please do not hesitate to share them with me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike".



State Senator Pat Jehlen, Congressman Mike Capuano, Somerville Mayor Joe Curtatone, and State Rep. Carl Sciortino at the Lechmere station on the MBTA Green Line, discussing its extension into Medford. The project is authorized for federal funding in HR 3.

Transportation

Congress passed the long-delayed transportation reauthorization bill: H.R. 3 “The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users”. This \$286.4 billion six-year bill funds road and transit projects across the country. It contains \$3.658 billion for Massachusetts’ highways and \$1.576 billion for transit projects for a total of \$5.23 billion. This is an increase of approximately \$1.08 billion, or 25% over the previous bill.

This money will improve roadways, repair bridges and enhance transit options for commuters. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, the bill will also create at least 41,000 jobs per year in Massachusetts, 8,500 of which are new jobs.

Some of the state’s overall funding allocation is set aside for specific projects. Some of these include the East Boston Haul Road, the Somerville bike path, Melnea Cass Boulevard, the North Washington Street Bridge, a study of the I-93/Mystic Avenue Interchange at Assembly Square, the Longfellow Bridge, Warren Street, Blue Hill Avenue, the Chelsea Street Bridge, and Rutherford Avenue.

The legislation also authorizes the Green Line extension, the Silver Line, the Urban Ring, the Blue Line extension and Assembly Square, establishing eligibility for future federal funding. It designates the north and southbound tunnel of Interstate 93 the Thomas P. “Tip” O’Neill, Jr. Tunnel, in recognition of the late Speaker’s significant contribution to the Central Artery/Tunnel Project.

Maintaining and improving our infrastructure will ensure that Massachusetts remains competitive. This bill invests billions of dollars in our roads, bridges and public transit.

Protecting Young Witnesses

My legislation creating a grant program for young witness assistance initiatives passed in the House as an amendment to the Department of Justice Appropriations Authorization Act (H.R. 3402).

Since taking office in 1999, I have worked to provide more resources for young witnesses. All too often, we hear stories about young people who are harassed and even harmed because they speak out about a crime.

The funding available through my legislation may be used for a variety of witness programs including counseling, pre- and post-trial assistance, educational services for young witnesses who are removed from or change their school for safety concerns, and protective services.

Sudan

Although Congress and President Bush agree that atrocities in the Darfur region of Sudan constitute genocide, violence there continues. Millions have been driven from their homes. African Union troops and humanitarian workers have been kidnapped and killed. The United Nations recently reported that nearly three-quarter of a million refugees are beyond the reach of humanitarian aid.

I co-founded the Congressional Caucus on Sudan to focus attention on these tragedies and to maintain our sense of urgency. There have been several troubling developments in US policy, and I have written to Secretary of State Rice requesting an explanation. More than 100 members of Congress joined me in this effort.

Our government appears to be softening its policy toward Sudan. The State Department granted a waiver to the Sudanese government, permitting it to hire a U.S. lobbyist to help improve its image. Additionally, the State Department upgraded Sudan’s Trafficking in Persons status to a Tier II watch-list country. Only a year

(continued on page 3)



Sign up for my regular e-updates at
www.house.gov/capuano.

Iraq

In October I traveled to Iraq to review conditions leading up to the October 15th Constitutional referendum and to gather impressions from those on the ground regarding how much progress is being made.

I voted against authorizing the President to invade Iraq. That resolution passed and our troops have been engaged in combat for over two years. The President says he won't bring our troops home until Iraq can stand on its own against insurgents. He says his decisions will be "circumstance-based not calendar-based," but offers no criteria to determine if Iraq is progressing towards democratic self-reliance. The recent election is an obvious benchmark, and the President should treat it as such.

On December 15th Iraqis again went to the polls, this time to elect Parliamentary representatives. The aftermath is providing all of us with another chance to judge the progress of Iraqi democracy. We should judge the success of that election, not by the results, but by the way Iraqis react to those results. Have those who lost the election and their supporters committed to peaceful protest, or have they taken up arms against the winners? However they respond, we should begin to withdraw our troops by mid-February.

By now, we have a fair measure of the likelihood of a stable democracy in Iraq. There have been three national elections, two sets of elected legislators, several Constitutional drafts, over a year of democratic representation, hundreds of billions of American dollars and two years of occupation. It seems reasonable to judge whether Iraqis have made significant progress towards defending themselves from insurgents after more than a year of training troops and police. It is time to make these determinations and start withdrawing our troops. Either we have assisted in the creation of a viable post-Saddam Iraq, or we have failed.

February may not be soon enough for some and it may be too soon for others. Regardless, I believe President Bush has had ample time to determine if Iraq meets his stated criteria.

We should not have gone to Iraq. Now that we are there we must set honest and open standards for success and reasonable benchmarks for achieving them. With the results and aftermath of another election behind us, the President should start withdrawing troops by mid-February.



Congressman Capuano recently met with Liora Kasten from the American Anti-Slavery Group, Gloria White-Hammond, co-chair of the MA Coalition to Save Darfur, Kenneth Sweder, co-chair of the MA Coalition to Save Darfur, and Weldon Kennedy from Students Taking Action Now Darfur (STAND) to discuss the situation in Darfur.

Sudan *(continued from page 2)*

ago, the UN issued a report documenting cases of Sudanese troops involved in abductions and sexual slavery. In light of this testimony, it is shocking that Sudan was upgraded.

We have rightly called the atrocities in Darfur genocide. We are pledged as a nation to prevent and punish genocide, and we must not take any actions inconsistent with that historic commitment.

The Federal Deficit

When this newsletter went to print, our federal deficit was \$8,107,952,560,719.68. Since January of 2001, our national debt has grown at an average rate of \$930,163.12 PER MINUTE. If you'd like to review more deficit stats, log onto our website at www.house.gov/capuano.



Sign up for my regular e-updates at
www.house.gov/capuano.

www.house.gov/capuanano

Website and E-mail

Fax: (202) 225-9322

Phone: (202) 225-5111

Washington, DC 20515

1530 Longworth Building

Washington Office

Fax: (617) 621-8628

Phone: (617) 621-6208

Administration Building, Room 110

Roxbury Community College

District Offices

OFFICIAL BUSINESS

Washington, D.C. 20515

U.S. House of Representatives
Congress of the United States

Massachusetts

8th Congressional District

POSTAL PATRON-LOCAL

ECRWSS

Michael J. Capuano
M.C.

Online Community Meeting

In October I hosted an online community meeting. Constituents had an opportunity to e-mail me questions and I spent an hour answering as many as I could. The transcript of the meeting is posted on my website if you'd like to check out some of the topics. I have scheduled another online meeting for **Wednesday, January 25th, 2006 from 6:30–7:30 PM**. You may post a question in advance by visiting my website. To join me on January 25th, simply go to www.house.gov/capuanano. At the conclusion of the meeting we will post the transcript for those unable to participate at the scheduled time. We have also scheduled some community meetings in the 8th district at the end of January. Please join me at one of the following locations:

Morville House Community Room

100 Norway Street, Boston

10:00–11:30 a.m. on Saturday, January 28th

Bowdoin Community Health Center

Conference Room, 230 Bowdoin Street, Dorchester

12:00–1:30 p.m. on Saturday, January 28th

Chelsea Public Library

569 Broadway, Chelsea

6:00–7:30 pm on Monday, January 30th



Sign up for my regular e-updates at
www.house.gov/capuanano.

We will host additional community meetings throughout the 8th district in the coming months. For more information, give us a call or visit our website at www.house.gov/capuanano.